



SEN Youth Voice

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We all know that...

Merton has three SEN settings:

Melbury College, Perseid School and Cricket Green School.

The three schools cater for young people with very different needs and levels of independence.

Every person is unique, and people who share the same access needs may have differing attitudes, desires and abilities.

Not all young people who have a disability recognise that they have additional needs, therefore, do not naturally affiliate to a SEN offer.

Transport for young people with SEN is often challenging – cost, access and availability.



The why...

The Sport England Children and Young People's Active Lives Survey measures the sport and physical activity behaviours of young people between the ages of 5 -16.

The survey is conducted through mainstream schools and is not available to Special Educational Needs settings.

Merton is keen to develop a deeper understanding of the physical activity behaviours of young residents with additional needs and develop projects guided by youth voice.

The Sport & Leisure Team worked with the Merton School Sport Partnership to develop inclusive focus groups and online surveys that explore attitudes to physical activity with young people who attend a Merton SEN setting.



What did we do...

Held a focus group in each school:

Perseid	6 pupils	Sixth Form
Melbury	10 pupils	Late Primary and Early Secondary
Cricket Green	12 pupils	Secondary Age

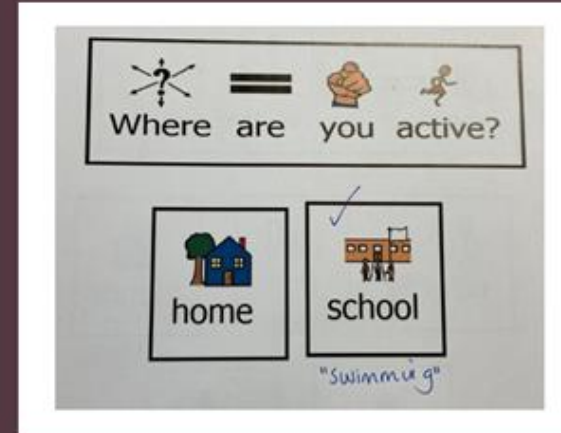
To capture wider youth voice an online survey was designed to ensure any young person from the schools wanting to contribute could.

Designed a parent/carer online survey for all schools to capture physical activity levels and provide parents/carers with a mechanism to feed into the research.

It should be highlighted that boys dominated the focus groups and this maybe reflected in the finding. However, more boys are enrolled at SEN schools than girls, and therefore, the groups were reflective of the student population.



Images from the focus groups



Key Takeaways

Where do the participants like to be active?

Majority of participants are happy to exercise and be active at their school.

Being active online, in the swimming pool and at a multi use games area were all popular places for physical activity.

Discussions at Melbury College and Cricket Green mirrored each other. When discussing places the pupils do not like being active in the youth centre setting and library were highlighted.

What activities do the participants want to do?

All three schools ranked racket sports highly and as something they like to do. This may link to the Tim Henman Foundation project that is currently being delivered in all three schools.

Participants at Melbury College and Cricket Green disliked the interactive wall (gamification of sport), whereas pupils at Perseid didn't have a strong like or dislike of this type of physical activity.

At Perseid, trampolining was given a gold star by all pupils and was a firm favourite.

Other things to consider

In general, the participants liked competition providing it was accessible (inclusive), and competitors were of a similar age and ability.

Needing time to rest after school was mentioned at all three groups.

Access to fresh air was also highlighted at all the schools

Melbury College



MelroseSchool

Provides a setting for pupils with medical conditions, complex mental health needs, autism and associated speech, language and communication needs.

Participants enjoy taking part in physical activity with people their own age and ability, they do not like to take part with older children as fear they may get hurt. Pupils enjoy being active with their friends, family and on their own.

Participants were happy to be active in the swimming pool and at a multi use games area. However, the most popular places to be active were the sports hall and online. Participants were not happy to be active in libraries and youth centres.



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Melbury College



MelroseSchool

Participants find out about physical activity opportunities from teachers, family members and reddit.com The group was split on their feelings around competition, but did highlight they do not like losing and feeling disappointed.

Activities the participants enjoy are:

- Ball Sports, especially football and basketball
- BMX and Cycling
- Racket Sports

All participants highlighted they do not like dancing and the interactive wall. Roller skating was also an unpopular activity. When asked if there were any activities, they would like access to that they currently do not, golf was suggested.



Perseid School

Pupils at Perseid School have severe and complex learning difficulties, autism and/or physical sensory needs.

The young people were very positive, preferring to give information on things they like and spoke positively about MSSP activities.

Participants highlighted that they:

- Enjoy competition apart from when they feel disappointed.
- Like to be active in and outside school, but that it is important to have time to relax.
- Like to be active with their friends, family and on their own.
- Feel transport is the biggest barrier to being active, with time and feeling welcomed highlighted as challenges.



Perseid School



Activities that are popular with the participants were:

- Racket sports, especially tennis
- Cricket
- Trampolining
- BMX/Cycling

Trampolining was given a gold star by all pupils and was a firm favourite.

All participants like to be active in parks and greenspaces, other spaces highlighted were:

- Online
- Library
- Swimming Pool
- Greenspace
- Multi Use Games Area



Cricket Green School



Pupils at Cricket Green School experience many challenges to learning. Needs are wide ranging and may include physical, social or emotional immaturity, low self esteem, language and communication difficulties.

100% of the participants liked being active in a pool, other popular places were the outdoor gym and multi use games area. 75% of the focus group liked to be active online, in greenspaces and in a sports hall. This is mirrored in the activities the participants like to do, with 100% enjoying swimming, which was closely followed by ball sports and trampolining. Other popular activities with the group were tennis, cricket, running and walking.

When asked what activities they would like to try the following were highlighted: American football, rugby, dodge ball, obstacle courses, baseball, handball, road cycling and boxing.

Activities that the group did not like were gymnastics and dance. Roller skating, fitness classes and the interactive wall also scored poorly. However, during a discussion the participants felt an interactive wall might be something they would enjoy.



Cricket Green School



The water sports and youth centre settings were very unpopular places to be active. Half the group sited a library as a place they would not like to be active in: *“I wouldn’t want to be active in a library as you need to be quiet”*.

Most participants highlighted they like being outside in the fresh air and that enjoyed being active with friends (in and out of school), teachers, and their pets.

Overall, the participants enjoyed competition as part of a team. Less than half the group preferred to compete with themselves.



Barriers to physical activity were discussed and many of the participants highlighted that time and transport are real barriers. Participants had lots of after school activities and lacked transport options. Feeling physically tired after school was also a reason for many not participating in physical activity after school hours.



Parent Views

An online survey provided parents with the opportunity to contribute.

8 parents/carers responded, 6 were from Perseid School.

It is recommended that children and young people (with SEN) undertake 120-180 minutes (2 to 3 hours) of physical activity per week, that helps to increase their heart rate. Half of the parent/carers felt that their child is doing over 120 minutes of physical activity per week.

It is also recommended that children and young people (with SEN) develop their strength and balance three times a week. Seven of the parent/carers felt their child undertakes strength and balance activities three times a week.



Parent Views

Parents/Carers were asked “What would help your child to be more active?”

- Cannot be more active as he is wheelchair bound
- More disability sports like companion cycling at David Weir Centre Carlshalton. My child does use her walker/standing frame several times a week to keep active.
- Out of school clubs. After school and at the weekends.
- More multi sport
- Additional extracurricular activities

Parents/Carers were given the opportunity to provide any other comments:

- Need more for children who are wheelchair bound
- Ensure cars cannot park in cycle lanes. We have a companion bike and it is very dangerous when cars are parked in the cycle lanes on both sides of the road and we have to go into the middle of the road. On Sundays, which is when we would cycle together, cars are parked both sides of the road in the cycle lanes on West Barnes Lane despite there being a public carpark at Waitrose. Merton needs to sort this out if they truly want to encourage sport safety.
- My daughter loves balls, and any ball associated play, but wouldn't be able to follow instruction and often plays by her own rules. So something that allows for freedom in a fun, safe space.
- I recommend family activities together.

Next Steps

Discuss the findings at the Accessible Sport for SEND Working Group

Ensure the Accessible Sport for SEND Working Group has an action plan built around youth voice.

Develop projects that reflect the findings.

For further questions please contact

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